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| AUTHOR | Meadows, Mark E.; And Others |
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of facilitation training upon the attitude of administrators and lead teachers toward their professional associates. The project consisted of a 3-day workshop in facilitative communication involving 25 participants and four trainers. Exercises designed to improve ability to respond with empathy, positive regard, and concreteness of expression were employed. Pre- and posttest measures were obtained using a form (MO-G-64) of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. Analysis of the pre- and posttest differences scores revealed a significant positive change P .05). (Author)

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# EFFECTS OF SHORT-TERM FACILITATION TRAINING ON ATTITUDES

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of facilitation training upon the attitude of administrators and lead teachers toward their professional associates. The project consisted of a three-day workshop in facilitative communication involving twenty-five participants and four trainers. Exercises designed to improve ability to respond with empathy, positive regard, and concreteness of expression were employed. Pre- and post-test measures were obtained using a form of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. Analysis of pre- and post-test difference scores revealed a significant positive change. ($P < .05$).

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Mark E. Meadows Hugh H. Donnan Don Belcher

Brief Vita

Dr. Mark E. Meadows is Associate Professor and Department Head, Counselor Education, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama. He has published in the Journal of Counseling Psychology, Journal of Counselor Education and Supervision, Journal of College Student Personnel and College and University.

Dr. Hugh H. Donnan is Associate Professor, Counselor Education, Auburn University. He has published in the Journal of Counseling Psychology, the Personnel and Guidance Journal and the Journal of College Student Personnel.

Mr. Don Belcher is Director of Student Services, University of Alabama-Birmingham. He is a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at Auburn University.

# EFFECTS OF SHORT-TERM FACILITATION TRAINING ON ATTITUDES

The 1970-71 school year was marked by continued movement to unitary public school systems in the South. For the first time, large numbers of black and white students attending merged elementary and secondary schools was the rule. In addition, desegregation of public school faculties and administrative staffs increased. The rapid transition to unitary schools gave rise to a recognition of special communication needs of both black and white educators.

This report is based upon a project designed to facilitate improved communication in interpersonal relations among the administrative and supervisory staff of a southern public school system in a community of approximately 28,000. It was hoped that the project would result in improved interpersonal communication functioning among the desegregated administrative staff.

## Method

Rationale. The importance of core conditions in various types of communication has been described by Carkhuff (1969). Seven core conditions have been postulated; three "facilitative" conditions and four "action" conditions. Facilitative conditions are those created by each of us by what and how we communicate. They account for the degree of helpfulness we provide others. Facilitative conditions stimulate the other person to explore himself to self-understanding (Carkhuff, 1969).

A workshop format was planned which provided fifteen hours of training over a three-day period on the three facilitative conditions of empathy, respect, and concreteness of expression. It was felt that training in

these facilitative dimensions would yield positive results insofar as communication and working relationships with professional colleagues was concerned.

Subjects. Twenty-five supervisors, principals, assistant principals and lead teachers comprised the subjects for the workshop. This number included approximately 90 percent of the entire administrative and supervisory staff of the school system. Thirteen subjects were male; twelve were female. While primary focus was on relationships with colleagues, it was noteworthy that the subjects were functioning in a newly integrated school system and represented nearly equal numbers of blacks and whites, many of them interacting for the first time as peers.

Procedures

Participants were involved in a series of tasks and exercises. Each activity provided for both increasing amounts of personal involvement on the part of participants and feedback from others concerning one's level of facilitative communication. The following is a brief description of each activity.

....A series of video-taped helpee statements and helper responses was presented. Participants were asked to rate the level of communication offered by the helper in terms of high or low (helpful or non-helpful). This procedure continued until the entire group reached unanimity with respect to discriminating between helpful and non-helpful responses.

....Participants were separated into four smaller groups, each led by a trainer. Taped helpee-helper excerpts were presented until each trainer was satisfied with the group's ability to discriminate between helpful and non-helpful responses.

....Carkhuff's (1969) rating scale designed to assess levels of facilitative communication provided in interpersonal interaction was described to participants. Assessments are based on a five point scale. Level 1 is the lowest level of functioning and level 5 the highest. Participants were trained to make responses at level 3 or above. Level 3 is defined as the minimally facilitative functioning level leading the helpee to further self-exploration and is considered helpful (Carkhuff, 1969).

....In small groups participants were presented a series of helpee statements only. Group members were asked to respond anonymously in the helper role by writing a response on a 3 X 5 card. The trainer led the group in estimating the level of empathic understanding communicated in each written response. Level 3 responses or above were sought.

....Role playing in small groups with group members playing the roles of helper and helpee was the next workshop activity. The helpee was instructed to present a personally relevant statement and the helper attempted to respond at level 3 or above. Group members rated each response.

....Role playing continued, however, personally relevant material of a more extended nature was presented by the helpee and the helper was instructed to practice the additional facilitative dimensions of respect and concreteness. Again, a rating of the helper's response, this time on all facilitative dimensions, was provided by group members.

....In the final training activity, group members were instructed to give close attention to non-verbal communication, including posture, facial expression, eye movement, etc., in the role playing dyad.

## ATTITUDE MEASUREMENT

The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory, Form MO-G-64, was used to measure attitudes of subjects toward "other significant people." (The

latter was defined as the general attitudes the participants held toward their co-workers in their various schools.) This instrument was selected because of its construct relevance to the "helping relationship" training emphasis of the workshop. While the Inventory was designed to measure four distinct dimensions, namely, emphatic understanding, congruence, level of regard, and unconditionality of regard, there is evidence that a general factor may account for most of the variance among the sub-scales. (Mills and Zytowsky, 1967). Other research indicates as many as three significant factors (Walker and Little, 1969). In light of these data it was decided to take the individual's total score as an indication of a generalized attitude based on his interpersonal relationships.

The Inventory was administered to the 25 participants at the outset of the first session and again at the close of the last session at the end of the third day.

Raw scores were subjected to the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (Bruning and Kintz, 1968). This technique assessed the direction as well as the magnitude of differences between pre- and post-test scores. It is appropriate for pre- and post-test comparisons on the same subjects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yielded a significant T value of 86.5 ($P < .05$). This was interpreted as a desired attitude change for the group as a whole and thus was taken as supportive evidence that the workshop goals were achieved. Some degree of growth in self-insight and ability to understand others was inferred as a result of the facilitative training. It is emphasized that the purpose of the present study was to determine the general effects of a methodology aimed at better interpersonal communication functioning. The results were encouraging. These findings

can be useful in further investigation, however, several weaknesses in the present study should be noted. No controls were used. No analysis of sex differences was made. Also, there is no way of knowing if the observed changes in inventory scores were due to Hawthorne effects and/or a social desirability bias affecting inventory taking behavior. Moreover, one can only speculate as to the stability of these change scores. Finally, subsequent investigations should attempt to consider the importance of training duration, as well as determine differential effects as a function of individual trainers.

The results of pre- and post-test measures on a Relationship Inventory were described above. While the results were positive, it was felt that the usefulness of the communication training model was also demonstrated in the results of a questionnaire where the participants evaluated their experience. Virtually all participants reported that they had learned more about how they responded in interpersonal communication. Each participant listed at least one way in which he would behave differently in subsequent interpersonal communication in his work setting. Several participants arranged a similar three-day workshop for a group of faculty and students in their school.

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